



Speech by

## Fiona Simpson

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

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### CRIMINAL CODE (TRUTH IN PARLIAMENT) AMENDMENT BILL

**Miss SIMPSON** (Maroochydore—LNP) (9.57 pm): Any threads of credibility in which the Labor Party dresses itself as the self-anointed party of reform was torn asunder two years ago by its naked ruthlessness to save ALP minister Gordon Nuttall from his own folly of deliberately misleading a parliamentary estimates committee. The Labor Party members trampled any respect for this parliament into the dust.

Their further movement to bring about a 'Freedom to Lie Bill' before this parliament is one that has brought the whole parliament into disrepute. A lot of people are very cynical about politicians. They do not necessarily have a high opinion of the values that politicians hold. I know that, in reality, most individual members of parliament come into this place for the right reason—they want to serve. It is such a shame to see, when those whose actions were unprincipled get caught out, their leader not only defend them but also change the Criminal Code to protect them. That brings this parliament and many good MPs into disrepute. But worst still, it destabilises people's belief in the very system of government.

It is a ruthless act of government, in this case a Labor government, to change the Criminal Code in the way that it did and to move a motion before the parliament to absolve Gordon Nuttall.

**Mr Gray** interjected.

**Mr Rickuss** interjected.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Ms Darling): Order, member for Lockyer and member for Gaven. I will warn you both under standing order 253.

**Miss SIMPSON:** Labor had no scruples about throwing out Sir Samuel Griffith's sage drafting of sections of the Criminal Code in relation to lying to or misleading parliament and its committees. They were concerned that one of their own had deliberately abused this parliament and they wanted to protect him. Through this bill, the LNP will ensure that there is an opportunity for the blot upon the history books of this parliament to be absolved to remedy what the Labor Party did and to recognise that there is an opportunity to re-establish people's hopes that this parliament really is here to serve them and not just to serve those who have an extraordinary majority and will use it at any cost.

Let us look to history, because the leaders of the Labor Party who brought this House into disrepute by letting Gordon Nuttall off the hook made some rather glowing comments about the former health minister. It is worth repeating those comments here today, as they give a salutary insight into why they were so desperate to try to paint somebody who had committed such an action as a fine man of integrity when history has shown he too was willing to do whatever it took, within the estimates committee process, to protect himself. Let us consider what Anna Bligh, the then deputy Premier and now the Premier of Queensland, said. She stated—

For those of us who are colleagues of the member for Sandgate, for those of us who have worked with him, for those who have sat with him around a cabinet table and know him to be a decent man—a man of integrity—this will not be easy.

Anna Bligh's insight into Gordon Nuttall was that he was a man of integrity. She has tried to back away from those comments in recent times, but as the Deputy Premier—one of the leaders of the Labor Party,

leading the charge—she was willing to change the Criminal Code in order to provide an out for Gordon Nuttall in regard to alleged offences against the parliament.

Let us look at some of the comments of other ministers who still sit within her cabinet. Warren Pitt attested to 'the good character of the member for Sandgate, a character which those opposite have sought'—

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Wettenhall): Order! I ask that the member for Maroochydore refer to the former member for Sandgate in those terms.

**Miss SIMPSON:** It is a direct quote. I note that it is the former member for Sandgate and not the current member for Sandgate, but I was giving a direct quote. Gordon Nuttall's slate was effectively wiped clean in regard to these offences. At the time Paul Lucas said, 'I know the member for Sandgate well and I believe that he is a good and honest man.' Another Labor luminary, Tom Barton, said, '...I want to express my beliefs on the honesty of a member, the member for Sandgate, whom I have known for almost 30 years.' He went on to tell the House in great detail about the former member for Sandgate. The contribution of Gary Fenlon, the current member for Greenslopes, takes the cake. It is quite astounding and has been quoted before, but for the benefit of this debate I will quote it again. He said. '...the member for Sandgate is one of the greatest members who has ever entered this parliament.' God help us! Because of that member of parliament, the Labor Party was willing to rip up a critical section of the Criminal Code.

If that is the standard by which they judge a member of the Queensland parliament, it is no wonder that the people start to hold politicians in disregard. I urge the members of this parliament, including the Labor members who continue to sit opposite with their extraordinary majority, to reconsider the importance of upholding the integrity of this parliament. I ask them to reconsider their stated intention to vote against this legislation. I ask them to consider that, by voting against this LNP private member's bill, they are endorsing the actions of Premier Beattie and his then deputy Anna Bligh when they rose in this House and defended their actions by saying what a fine fellow Gordon Nuttall was. That is why the Labor Party took the extraordinary action of wiping out a nearly 150-year-old statute that, until that time, had stood the test of time. Never before had anyone dared to suggest that it should be ripped up and thrown out of the Criminal Code.

Labor's 'freedom to lie bill' should be overturned. The bill that we present before the parliament is about restoring integrity to this place and ensuring that those who deliberately mislead it have applied to them an appropriate sanction, and to ensure that those who have stood in this place in defence of a man who has brought this place into disrepute could finally remove the stain from the history of this parliament. I urge members to support this bill. I urge people never to forget the circumstances in which Labor moved the amendments to the Criminal Code, because no fine rhetoric could ever disguise the bare ruthlessness behind why they undertook this disgusting action.